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Good Afternoon Rep. Lawlor, Sen. MacDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for granting us your time and allowing us to voice our testimonies to you.

Connecticut stands at a cross road. With proposed House Bill 5445 Connecticut will grant immunity to those seeking help for themselves or others in time of an alcohol or drug-related overdose. As a member of Students for Sensible Drug Policy and the president of the University of Connecticut's chapter I applaud Senator Orange for her proposal of this bill.

A citizen should not have to think twice if they find themselves in a situation involving an overdose. When even a minute of hesitation can literally mean life or death it is imperative that a fast reaction is made so that medical response can assist the person in need. Currently a person seeking help for themselves or others risks possible arrest or prosecution creating a stigma of fear among those who are unfortunate enough to find themselves in such a circumstance. Creating enough of a fear that only 10%-56% of those in such situations actually call for medical assistance, most of which call after trying to revive the victim themselves.¹ This is not sensible policy.

Considering that overdoses are the second leading cause of accidental death within our country this bill shows that the state's concern for its citizen's health and safety is first and foremost in their mind. Emphasizing more regard for their lives rather than their incarceration.

It pleases me to say that the University of Connecticut is one of 90 colleges across the nation that has recognized the benefits of such policies and has since established one. Cornell University enacted their Good Samaritan policy in 2002 and in 2006 they reported that their emergency response calls doubled while alcohol abuse rates remained at a relatively constant level. It is time that the state joins us in recognizing and supporting responsible decision making.

House Bill 5445 along with Senate Bill 349 are both steps toward more progressive and responsible policies for Connecticut. These policies and more will be discussed at our Drug Policy Conference this Saturday, March 28th, at the Dodd Center of the University of Connecticut. I'd like to extend each of you an invitation and hope that you attend to gain more knowledge regarding sensible policy changes that parallel the ones currently before you. So I urge you all to support House Bill 5445.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing you make the right decision for our state.

¹ 2005 Drug and Alcohol Dependence Journal